

Owner/Manager Resource

Achieving High Compliance with Smokefree Multi-unit Housing Policies

Secondhand smoke knows no boundaries. While 85% of Montana households control their exposure by not permitting smoking inside the home, residents in multi-unit housing cannot control their exposure to secondhand and thirdhand tobacco smoke if their neighbors are smoking. Ventilation and air purifiers cannot end the harm caused by exposure to secondhand and thirdhand smoke. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers has commented on the need to eliminate smoking rather than try to ventilate it stating that “the only means of effectively eliminating health risk associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity.”

Smokefree policies ensure that residents in multi-unit housing households are not exposed, lowers cleaning costs and helps prevent fires caused by cigarettes. The Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program (MTUPP) suggests implementing the following strategies to achieve high compliance:

- Set up a meeting with your local Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program Specialist to discuss this opportunity and MTUPP resources.
- Review the resources, including the sample MTUPP model comprehensive multi-unit smokefree housing policy, and decide on the best policy and compliance strategy for your facility and determine the implementation date.
- Acquire and post MTUPP’s “Smokefree” signs in the parking lot(s), in strategic areas inside the building, on doors entering and existing each unit (to help with guest issues) and around the community (playground, garden areas, etc).
- For existing residents:
 - Notify residents of your intentions well in advance of the new policy implementation date and request that they sign a smokefree lease addendum leading with your reasons such as reducing maintenance and cleaning costs, saving on fire insurance, reducing the danger of fires and protecting tenants from secondhand and thirdhand smoke.
 - Provide Fact Sheets and self-help smoking cessation materials available through the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program as, often, a smokefree policy creates a good incentive for many to quit smoking altogether.
 - If financial consequences exist in your policy, inform existing residents that smoking in their apartments will expose them to financial obligations for bringing the apartment back to rentable condition.
- For new residents:
 - Inform any prospective residents of the smokefree policy when showing the property, post on websites, materials, etc.
 - When new tenant signs the lease, highlight the smokefree policy and require that they sign a smokefree lease addendum.
 - Include a MTUPP Smokefree Housing Project and Quitline factsheets in new resident packets.

- If financial consequences exist in your housing policy, inform new residents that smoking in their apartments will expose them to financial obligations for bringing the apartment back to rentable condition.
- Continually advertise and promote the apartments as smokefree in all advertising media to attract residents who do not smoke or who smoke only outside.
- Update your information on the MTHousingSearch webpage to reflect the smokefree policy (<http://mthousingsearch.com/>).
- Thank residents periodically for high compliance. Consider developing some sort of incentive for high compliance.
- Use the same warning and enforcement methods for smokefree rule violations that are used for other property rules.

Once you implement a policy, smoking will be so noticeable by other residents that you are likely to hear about it. Prompt consistent action will send a clear message. Compliance with a smoking policy is a lot less of a headache than mediating disputes between smokers and nonsmokers without a policy in place. In worksites and other public areas, smoking policies have been largely self-enforcing. No heavy policing is necessary if active and continual communication are planned and executed.